

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 014719

FOLLOWING TELEGRAM FROM KINSHASA DATED JANUARY 10, 1978
SENT SECSTATE WASHDC INFO BRAZZAVILLE, LUSAKA,
PRETORIA, BRUSSELS, LISBON, LUBUMBASHI, BUKAVU IS RE-
PEATED TO YOU: QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 0266

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CG, AO

SUBJECT: MOBUTU MAKES MODERATE PUBLIC STATEMENT ON ZAIRIAN/ANGOLAN
RELATIONS

REF: A) KINSHASA 0142 (NOTAL; B) KINSHASA 12161 (NOTAL)

2. SUMMARY: DURING PRESIDENT MOBUTU'S JANUARY 6 SPEECH
TO THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS, HE REPEATED EARLIER OFFERS
(REF A) TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH ANGOLA. HE ALSO OFFERED
TO ACCEPT, ON A RECIPROCAL BASIS, THE PRESENCE OF NEUTRAL
OBSERVERS TO ENSURE THAT NEITHER COUNTRY IS USED AS AN
OPERATIONAL BASE OR CENTER OF SUBERSION AGAINST THE OTHER.
END SUMMARY.

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2. AT A JANUARY 6 GOZ RECEPTION WHERE PRESIDENT MOBUTU
EXCHANGED NEW YEARS GREETINGS WITH THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS,
MOBUTU INCLUDED IN HIS MESSAGE THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS
ON ZAIRIAN-ANGOLAN RELATIONS:

BEGIN TEXT: WHEN IT HAPPENS THAT RELATIONS WITH

A PARTICULAR COUNTRY ARE UNDER A FEW CLOUDS OR LACK CLARITY, WE SPARE NO EFFORT TO ACHIEVE NORMALIZATION. I WILL MENTION AS AN EXAMPLE, ONLY THE CASE OF ANGOLA. FAITHFUL TO THE PRINCIPLE OF AUTHENTICITY BY WHICH WE ACCEPT EACH (COUNTRY) AS IT IS, WE DECIDED EXACTLY ONE YEAR AGO TO RECOGNIZE THE MPLA REGIME AND TO ESTABLISH DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH LUANDA. EVEN THOUGH THIS GESTURE HAS BEEN RECEIVED IN A VERY LUKEWARM MANNER, OUR DECISION STANDS; FOR IT IS SINCERE AND THOROUGHLY CONSIDERED.

THUS IN THE COURSE OF 1977 WE INVITED OUR ANGOLAN BROTHERS TO ATTEND OUR INAUGURATION CEREMONIES. SIMILARLY WE SENT A MESSAGE OF SOLIDARITY AND SUPPORT ON THE OCCASION OF THE CONGRESS OF THE MPLA. IN RETURN PRESIDENT NETO SENT US A MESSAGE OF GOOD WISHES FOR THE NEW YEAR.

THOSE ARE CERTAINLY GOOD SIGNS, THE POSITIVE VALUE OF WHICH WILL ONLY BECOME CLEAR IN THE LIGHT OF LATER DEVELOPMENTS - FOR IT IS OBVIOUSLY IMPORTANT THAT EACH PARTY BE FULLY CONVINCED OF THE GOOD FAITH OF THE OTHER IN ORDER TO WORK TOWARD PEACE AND TRUE NORMALIZATION.

SO FAR AS WE ARE CONCERNED, NOBODY CAN DOUBT OUR GOOD WILL. OUR COUNTRY WILL NEVER SERVE AS A BASE OF OPERATIONS OR A HOTBED OF SUBVERSIVE ACTION AGAINST AN INDEPENDENT COUNTRY IN AFRICA. THEREFORE, WE ARE READY, AT ANY TIME, TO ACCEPT ON A RECIPROCAL

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BASIS THE PRESENCE OF NEUTRAL OBSERVERS IN OUR COUNTRY WHO WOULD BE ABLE TO VERIFY THE TRUTH OF OUR STATEMENTS. ZAIRE, WHICH ASPIRES ONLY TO LIVE IN PEACE, CANNOT BUT REJECT WITH CONTEMPT ALLEGATIONS THAT WE WOULD ENCOURAGE ON OUR TERRITORY MOVEMENTS IN OPPOSITION TO OTHER REGIMES OR PLANS TO IMPERIL OTHER INDEPENDENT AFRICAN STATES. THOSE WHO GIVE RISE TO SUCH RUMORS ARE DISHONEST OR AWKWARDLY CONCEAL THEIR PERNICIOUS INTENTIONS. END TEXT.

3. COMMENT: THIS IS THE LATEST IN A SERIES OF RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS COMING FROM BOTH KINSHASA AND LUANDA BEARING ON NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS. IT IS WIDELY BELIEVED BY DIPLOMATIC OBSERVERS HERE THAT MORE IS TAKING PLACE BEHIND THE SCENES. FOCUS OF SPECULATION IS ON POSSIBLE INTERMEDIARY ROLE BY KAUNDA. AS REPORTED REF B, MOBUTU MET WITH KAUNDA DECEMBER 20 IN ZAMBIA AND, ACCORDING TO UNCONFIRMED REPORTS, ZAIRE'S PROBLEMS WITH ANGOLA WERE AMONG MATTERS DISCUSSED. DUTCH AMBASSADOR CLAIMS TO HAVE IT ON GOOD AUTHORITY THAT THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY MEETING BETWEEN ZAIRIANS AND ANGOLANS AT "LOWER POLITICAL LEVEL" IN ZAMBIA TOWARD THE END OF THE YEAR. FOREIGN MINISTER UMBA'S SUDDEN DEPARTURE JANUARY 9 FOR LUSAKA HAS ADDED MORE FUEL TO CURRENT SPECULATION. MEANWHILE, OTHER OBSERVERS VIEW RECENT CONTACTS BETWEEN MOBUTU AND PRESIDENT YHOMBI-OPANGO

(E.G. AT MOBUTU'S DECEMBER 5 INAUGURATION) AS RAISING POSSIBILITY OF
REACTIVATION OF CONGOLESE ROLE AS INTERMEDIARY. WHILE WE HAVE NO
CONFIRMATION THAT EITHER ANGOLAN OR ZAIRIAN
HAS IN FACT GONE BEYOND MERE
PUBLIC STATEMENTS, EVEN THIS MINIMUM, LONG-DISTANCE DIALOGUE
CONSTITUTES A WELCOME AND PERHAPS SIGNIFICANT CHANGE FROM COMPLETE
FREEZE THAT HAS CHARACTERIZED THEIR RELATIONS SINCE THE SHABA
WAR. THE EXTENT TO WHICH WARMER RHETORIC REFLECTS PROSPECTS FOR
A GENUINE THAW OF COURSE REMAINS TO BE SEEN.
CUTLER UNQUOTE
CHRISTOPHER

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